

Preston Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
held on Thursday 27th April 2023
at 8.00pm at Village Hall, Preston

Present: Councillors Mrs J Clark
Mrs P Stark
Mrs M Trinder (Chairman)

In attendance Lisa Lathane (Clerk & RFO)

Six members of public

1) Apologies: Apologies were sent from Cllr Burleigh and Cllr Morley.

2) Minutes of the 2022 AGM:

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 12 May 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman at the Parish Council meeting on Thursday 9 June 2022.

3) Annual Report

There have been 9 Parish Council Meetings in the last year with an overall attendance of 86%.

One of the main areas of work for the Parish Council is responding to Planning Applications. This year, from May 2022 to the present time, we have had 5 householder applications, completely different to last year when we had 19 and the two housing developments.

The Parish Council has liaised with Osprey Homes since work started at Castlefield last August and will continue to do so until the development is completed. The site manager is a good point of contact, on the ground rather than in an office, and if possible, will address any issues as soon as they arise.

The Parish Council has contacted Entity Connect about the state in which they left Butchers Lane after the recent electrical works and are in ongoing discussions with Osprey Homes about the deterioration of the lanes generally because of the development.

Contact has also been made with Elivia Homes who are developing the land adjacent to Dungarvan and that too will be maintained throughout the development process. Work started on that site last week.

Both Developers have agreed to the Parish Council's request that there is no work on their sites on Saturday 6 May so that nearby residents can watch the Coronation without being disturbed by construction noise.

The Parish Council was pleased to receive an email asking for a meeting with the Managing Director of The Door UK which is buying PHC. This has given us an early insight into what is being planned when it is converted into residential dwellings, although at this early stage nothing is confirmed. The Parish Council will keep the lines of communication open throughout the restoration process.

The Parish Council has responded to planning applications for two roundabouts to facilitate the East of Luton development. Although not in our Parish, we will be affected by the inevitable increase in traffic which will be generated from this development. We have recently been informed that no decision will be made on these roundabouts until a strategic master plan is in place for the whole development.

The Parish Council responds to planning applications for Luton airport and awaits the imminent application for an increase in passenger numbers to 32 million.

The Parish Council has continued to maintain the pavilion, the play equipment in both Church Meadow and the Recreation Ground, the pond, The Green and the village trees. The Cricket Club cuts the grass and prunes the hedges in the Recreation Ground as part of its licence to use it for cricket matches.

Councillor Clark continues to look after the footpaths and Councillor Marshall has liaised with Highways. Parish Councillors now have corporate email addresses to ensure that there is appropriate segregation and security for Parish Council business.

The Parish Council is working with North Herts District Council on plans to install a footpath through Church Meadow to link the Castlefield development with the path through the church yard. This is being funded by a section 106 contribution from the Castlefield development. We also have a grant of £310 from County Councillor David Barnard's Locality Budget for this project

The Parish Council is grateful to the many volunteers from the village who work hard and often unnoticed in a variety of ways, in particular by litter picking to protect the local environment, which is organised twice a year by The Preston Trust.

The Parish Council is particularly grateful to Pam Biggs who undertakes the weekly checks on the defibrillator in the Red Lion car park to ensure that it is always in working order.

A new initiative which is being developed is a Volunteer Emergency Telephone System. This will start in the summer after the volunteers are trained. In many cases when someone needs a defibrillator, there isn't anyone available to collect it from the Red Lion car park as the patient cannot be left

alone. This is when the Volunteers will be alerted and hopefully one of them will be available to collect the defibrillator, take it to where it is needed and help until an ambulance arrives. It is, of course, impossible to guarantee that a volunteer will be available at any given time, it is a best endeavours situation which we hope will never be required.

The Preston Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Committee quickly changed their title to The Preston's King's Coronation Celebrations Committee. I would like to thank them for again organising what promises to be an eventful and memorable weekend for the whole community.

I am very grateful to Lisa, our Clerk, who is also Responsible Financial Officer, for all her work and support this year. Lisa is now a qualified Clerk and her knowledge is proving to be invaluable to the work of the Parish Council.

Parish Councillors serve a 4 year term of office and a new term of office starts on May 9th. While some of us have been re-elected, three of the current Parish Councillors decided not to stand again. I would like to record my thanks to Angela Marshall and James Morley who are not continuing as Parish Councillors. I would also like to thank Sandra Palmer who resigned last October because of work commitments.

Pam Stark decided not to stand for re-election this time, having been a Parish Councillor for 26 years. Her first meeting was on 13 May 1997 which was an AGM followed by Parish Council meeting. Pam was Clerk for 10 years from July 1997 to July 2007 and her last meeting as a Parish Councillor is this evening.

In this time, Pam sent her apologies for three meetings: April 22 2009, April 23 2014, and May 4 2016 which was an AGM. I think you'll all agree that this is a remarkable achievement and I would like to thank her most sincerely for all her work, time and effort as a Parish Councillor.

The Parish Council has one new Councillor already elected and we will be co-opting two and hopefully three more at our next meeting at which point all seats will be filled and our work will continue.

As we move forward the Parish Council will endeavour to support the integration of new residents into the village. We will do our best to ensure that, as the village increases in size, the unique character of Preston with its strong sense of community is maintained for the benefit of all its residents.

4) Treasurer's Report

At the start of the 2022/23 financial year the Parish Council had funds of £31,462 which were later supplemented by income of £46,219. The largest part of which came from the receipt of Section 106 funding from the Castlefield housing development. This funding has been granted for specific projects:

- A gravel based permeable surface to replace the loose path surface on the permissive path through the Church yard from Church Meadow to Church Lane.
- The installation of a footpath, suitable for push chairs and mobility scooters, through Church Meadow which will link the public footpath which runs from Butchers Lane to Chequers Lane to the permissive path.
- A contribution towards maintenance of the Chiltern Way between Butchers Lane and Chequers Lane.
- The installation of four information boards in Wain Wood

In the last financial year an amount of £10,095.68 was received as precept from NHDC. We also claimed back £908.30 in VAT and received grants totalling £514. Also received was £752 from Preston Cricket Club for agreed costs at the Pavilion.

We spent £769 on grass cutting on the Village Green and at Church Meadow. We spent £3000 on pond maintenance this year, carrying out removal of silt, clearing of the drains and pipework and cutting back the vegetation around the pond. This was a large job but necessary and will need to be done at this scale every 10 years.

The defibrillator cabinet in the Red Lion car park was replaced at a cost of £604, which was partly funded from a Southern Rural Grant in the previous Financial Year.

At the end of the financial year the Parish Council had £52,376 in the bank. The majority of this amount is ring-fenced for specific future projects.

5) Reports from County and District Councillors

The Chairman read out a report from County and District Councillor David Barnard.

6) Police Report

The clerk read out a report sent by PCSO Heather Burrows.

7) Reports by Local Organisations

The following organisations addressed the meeting in person:

Preston Trust
 Preston Cricket Club
 Village Hall Committee

Preston Village Society
The Red Lion
Prospective Shop and Café Representative

The following organisations sent reports which were read out by the Clerk and the Chairman:

Neighbourhood Watch
St Martin's Church
Friends of St Martin's Church

8) Open Forum

No questions were asked or proposals tabled.

10) Date and time of next ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: To be decided.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.